

4 Environmental Analysis

4.1 SUMMARY

California State Parks is the lead agency responsible for preparation of the proposed ABDSP General Plan in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as required by the Public Resources Code Sections 5002.2 and 21000 et. Seq. This Environmental Analysis Section and other sections of this document constitute the first tier Environmental Impact Report (EIR) as defined in Section 15166 of the CEQA Guidelines. It should be recognized that the level of detail addressed by this EIR is comparable to the level of detail provided in the land-use proposals of the General Plan. As subsequent management plans and site-specific projects are proposed, they will be subject to further environmental review.

The proposed ABDSP General Plan includes modifications to land-use designations, the incorporation of goals and guidelines for protection of natural and cultural resources, and the development of appropriate recreational, interpretive, and operational facilities. The General Plan proposes to:

- ❑ Extend existing Wilderness by approximately 9%. This results in approximately 57,800 acres classified as a Wilderness sub-unit in addition to the State Park designation, thereby providing further protection to resources and wilderness values.
- ❑ Classify approximately 2,600 acres as a Cultural Preserve sub-unit in the San Felipe Valley area, in which development and uses are restricted to protect the integrity of significant sensitive resources.
- ❑ Establish management goals and guidelines and management zones for resource management, facility operations, and accessible interpretive and recreational programs for the public within ABDSP.

In addition, the General Plan proposes that seven focused management plans (Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, Backcountry Camping, Roads, Trails, Interpretive, and Facility) be prepared subsequent to adoption of the General Plan.

Development, maintenance, facility use, and recreational activities allowed by the General Plan have the potential to cause short- and long-term impacts to the environment. These impacts could include soil disturbance, erosion, lowered water quality and quantity, degradation of cultural resources, degradation of aesthetic resources, and degradation of sensitive plant and animal populations or their habitats. As a program level (first-tier) EIR (see CEQA Guidelines Sections 15166, 15168), the General Plan identifies broad, park-wide environmental impacts and mitigation measures. Future management plans, activities, and projects will be subject to additional environmental review in order to identify specific impacts and

appropriate mitigation and monitoring plans. All potentially new adverse impacts will be avoided, minimized, or mitigated to a level below significance.

Throughout the General Plan process, four Plan Alternatives were considered (see Figures 7.6–7.9) including Alternative 3 the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The Environmentally Superior Alternative is the same as the Preferred Plan except that in the Environmentally Superior Alternative:

- ❑ The amount of acreage of Natural or Cultural Preserves would be approximately 7% more. In addition, approximately 44,500 acres would be classified as a Cultural and/or Natural Preserve sub-unit to the existing State Park classification, thereby potentially significantly limiting recreation activities, such as highway-legal vehicle use, equestrian use, open camping, off-trail hiking, and overnight camping.
- ❑ Backcountry designations would be approximately 3% less.

The Preferred Plan allows for existing recreation activities to continue while providing protection to sensitive Park resources. The Environmentally Superior Alternative provides greater protection to cultural and natural resources, but has the potential to significantly affect existing recreation activities within ABDSP.

4.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

To meet requirements set forth in Section 5002.2 of the PRC and Section 4332 of title 14 of the California Administration Code, California State Parks has prepared this General Plan for ABDSP. The plan delineates a number of management zones and establishes a set of goals and guidelines (see Section 3), which will guide Park management and specific project implementation. These goals and guidelines address recreational, operational, interpretive, and resource management opportunities and constraints consistent with the classifications of State Park, State Wilderness, and Cultural Preserve, as set forth in Section 5019.53 – 5019.74, of the Public Resources Code and consistent with Department Resource Management Directives. The General Plan does not actually design or locate facilities, but instead establishes regions or “zones” that delineate levels of acceptable facility development, and also provides goals and guidelines for the appropriate types, locations, and designs of facilities that may be proposed in the future. The Park mission and vision give insight into the Park purpose and future planning efforts. The General Plan also establishes the primary interpretive themes for programs and activities.

4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Please refer to the description of the environmental setting in earlier sections *Existing Conditions and Issues* (Section 2), *Biotic Resources* (Section 2.2.2), *Cultural Resources* (Section 2.2.3), *Aesthetic* (Section 2.2.4), *Interpretive and Educational* (Section 2.2.5), *Recreational Resources* (Section 2.2.7), and *Planning Influences* (Section 2.3).

Access to the Park is available by a number of paved highways. Interstate 8 cuts along the southern boundary of ABDSP between Jacumba and Mountain Springs. State Highway 78 (see Figure 7.1 “Facilities”) bisects the Park in an east/west direction between Scissors Crossing and Ocotillo Wells and is a primary access corridor into the Park. Four county highways also provide access to the Park and to the town of Borrego Springs: County Highway S1, known as Sunrise Highway cuts through the high elevations between Mount Laguna and Cuyamaca Lake; County Highway S2 slices a northwest to southeast line through the southern half of the Park between Scissors Crossing and the Imperial County line near Mortero Wash; and County Highway S22 enters the Park at 4,000 feet elevation just east of the hamlet of Ranchita and descends into Borrego Valley, then proceeds eastward to Salton City, exiting the Park at the Imperial County Line. There are also four airstrips within the desert region of San Diego County: Borrego Valley Airport, Borrego Air Ranch, Earthquake Valley airstrip, and Agua Caliente airstrip.

4.4 PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Based on accumulated information from Park staff, resource inventories and studies, other agencies, Park managers, and the general public (written comments, public meetings, and Focused Use Group meetings), four plan alternatives were considered during the development of the proposed General Plan. The Preferred Plan is discussed in Section 3. The primary distinctions between the alternatives reflect State Park, Wilderness, and Natural/Cultural Preserve designations and the allowable activities and facilities in each of these land use areas. These alternatives are shown in Figures 7.6–7.9, and are compared in the “Alternatives Matrix Proposed Uses and Environmental Impacts” in Table 6.7.

The Preferred Plan emerged through incorporation of general public comments, resource data, and operational data obtained during the general plan process, as opposed to adopting any one of the alternative designs presented during the planning phase. Characteristics of each of the alternatives were used to formulate a plan that balanced protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources with providing opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation.

4.4.1 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred Alternative (Figure 7.6) is discussed in full in Section 3. The following is a brief synopsis of the six proposed zones:

4.4.1.2 Wilderness

A continuous effort to acquire more land by the Anza-Borrego Foundation has provided an opportunity to include adjacent areas into the Wilderness classification, as in the case of Coyote Canyon. An additional 9% of the Park will become State Wilderness under the Preferred Plan. New Wilderness areas are primarily based on natural landscape features, solitude, aesthetics, and protection of the Park's natural and cultural resources.

4.4.1.3 Cultural Preserve

The proposed Cultural Preserve near Scissors Crossing will limit recreation opportunities such as equestrian, mountain biking, and highway-legal vehicle use, but will permit hiking on designated trails and offer new educational/interpretive opportunities. Although the Cultural Preserve makes up less than 1% of the Park, it will protect the environmental integrity of some of ABDSP's most valuable and sensitive resources. Subsequent to the adoption of the General Plan, a Cultural Resources Management Plan, a Roads Management Plan and a Backcountry Camping Management Plan will assess the integrity of other areas and will potentially provide additional protection to specific sensitive resource areas.

4.4.1.4 Backcountry

The Backcountry Management Zone follows the guidelines set forth by the "State Park" designation (PRC 5019.53). Approximately 21% of the Park will be designated Backcountry. Open camping, hiking, mountain biking, equestrian riding, and driving on designated roads are among the recreational activities allowed in this zone. Though not an official sub-classification, the Backcountry Management Zone remains subject to the management and resource protection constraints as delineated by the existing "State Park" classification.

4.4.1.5 Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II

Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II have been established to provide the potential for new facilities that blend in with regional characteristics of the land, causing the least amount of impact while providing needed amenities for visitors. Visitor use will be limited to established campsites, roads, and trails in Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II. Open camping is prohibited in order to concentrate visitor use and avoid causing significant impacts to sensitive cultural and natural resources. The Park is within a two-hour drive of major metropolitan

areas such as San Diego and Riverside. As these cities grow and expand there will be a greater demand for recreational opportunities in ABDSP. New facilities will be provided as they are funded, planned, and developed. Future activities related to project development must be in compliance with the adopted General Plan and federal and state regulatory requirements.

4.4.1.6 Information/Entrance Zone

The Information/Entrance Zone establishes brief stopping or parking areas near the Park boundaries. Park orientation is the primary focus for these areas. Information regarding safety and allowable use throughout ASBDSP will be available in these zones.

Under the tiered environmental process, changes from existing conditions will undergo additional environmental review, to ensure avoidance or minimization of impacts to resources. The Preferred Alternative consolidates facilities and development within less environmentally-sensitive areas as delineated by Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II designations.

4.4.2 ALTERNATIVE 1

Alternative 1 (Figure 7.7) provides the largest area of Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II (approximately 9,700 acres). Under this alternative, these zones accommodate an increase in visitation to campgrounds and day-use areas. These Focused-Use Zones are relatively smaller in size from the Wilderness and Backcountry Zones but will accommodate a high concentration of people. Although visitors will be required to recreate in specifically designated campsites and on trails, damage to sensitive natural and cultural resources may occur. Alternative 1 land designations differ from the Preferred Plan in that there is more acreage in Focused-Use Zone I, Focused-Use Zone II, and Backcountry, and no increase in Wilderness acreage (see Table 6.7).

Alternative 1 incorporates the same types of projects as the Preferred Plan, but it classifies areas of the Park in a manner that is inconsistent with the purpose of the Park. The Declaration of Purpose, required by the Public Resources Code, Section 5002.2(b), states that: "ABDSP is to preserve the unique natural, cultural, and scenic resources and provide opportunities for high quality recreation consistent with the goal of protecting a healthy natural environment." Alternative 1 does not provide adequate protection to the natural and cultural resources that make ABDSP so unique.

4.4.3 ALTERNATIVE 2

Alternative 2 (Figure 7.8) proposes 1,100 acres of new Wilderness and proposes 206,900 acres of Backcountry. In ABDSP, Backcountry has the potential to allow new roads and utility lines through the Park. The number of utility trucks and utility-type facilities within the Park would have the potential to increase significantly. Backcountry land-use designation in Coyote Canyon would permit new roads and utility facilities that may cause an adverse effect on bighorn sheep habitat and wilderness qualities. This is the least environmentally sensitive alternative allowing for roads and low level facility development throughout approximately 206,900 acres of ABDSP. This alternative is inconsistent with the Park purpose and does not provide the same level of protection to natural and cultural resources as the Preferred Plan.

4.4.4 ALTERNATIVE 3 – ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR

Alternative 3 (Figure 7.9) can be considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative (Table 6.7) because it provides additional protection to sacred and sensitive resources through designation of Natural or Cultural Preserves. Preserve designations are the most protective sub-unit classifications in the State Park System. This alternative reflects the largest amount of acreage in the Natural/Cultural Preserve Zone, with approximately 44,500 acres of Preserve land proposed in the following areas: Harper Flats, Hapaha Flat, sections of Coyote Canyon, Borrego Badlands, an area located between S3 and Highway 78, Carrizo Badlands, and Carrizo Impact Area. Approximately 17,400 acres proposed as Natural/Cultural Preserves in Alternative 3 fall within the area proposed as wilderness in the Preferred Plan. However, 2,200 acres are located within the Carrizo Impact Area, which is part of the Backcountry Zone. Therefore, the number of acres designated as State Wilderness in Alternative 3 is less than in the Preferred Plan. But while Alternative 3 provides additional protection to sensitive resources, it has an adverse effect on certain existing outdoor recreation activities including highway-legal vehicle use, equestrian use, mountain bike use, and open camping. These activities would be restricted within the Natural/Cultural Preserve Zone. This alternative could cause a significant impact to recreation and is not within the general public's level of acceptable change. Furthermore, California State Parks contends that sensitive resources can be adequately protected, in compliance with existing policies and regulations, through resource-protective goals and guidelines and site-specific management and enforcement incorporated in the Preferred Plan. In addition, future management plans mandated by the Preferred Plan may result in heightened resource protection through the establishment of additional preserves. Such designations will occur based on further research and resource monitoring.

4.4.5 NO PROJECT

Public Resources Code 5003 states that before substantial work may be proposed within a state park, there must be a general plan. Therefore, the existing conditions, lack of needed facilities, and management limitations would continue if the General Plan were not adopted.

4.5 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

4.5.1 PREFERRED PLAN—ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

The Preferred Alternative for the General Plan proposes to designate management zones in order to establish clear expectations associated with various types of recreation activities and development that can occur in each geographic location. “Park-Wide and Area-Specific Management Goals and Guidelines” set specific measures that must be followed (see Section 3) and provide further direction for managing Park resources, visitor use, and development. As a General Plan, this document does not propose specific projects and therefore, cannot identify specific projects and significant environmental effects. Identification and discussion of potential significant effects of the General Plan proposals are also general in nature. In order to aid in the evaluation of potential adverse environmental effects, a table has been created that reflects reasonable projected visitor use and development in each management zone under the proposed General Plan (see Table 6.8 “Reasonable Projection of Development”). The scenarios presented, represent one possible level of development that could occur in each management zone. Within the range of possibilities, the scenarios depicted indicate the most extensive development that should be reasonably anticipated. The actual size, type, and location of facilities will be determined in future management plans (such as Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, Backcountry Camping, Roads, Trails, Interpretive, and Facility) or in specific project plans. Future management plans will be consistent with the goals and guidelines of the General Plan and based on many factors including natural and cultural resource protection, and visitor experience. In accordance with CEQA guidelines, these plans will undergo further environmental review when they are prepared.

As illustrated in Figure 7.6, the majority of potential facility development will occur within Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II. These zones represent approximately 1% of the Park’s total acreage. Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II have the potential to accommodate an increase in visitation and demand as the population in surrounding metropolitan areas increases. Facility and trail development is not expected to increase significantly in Backcountry, Wilderness, and Preserve areas. Information/Entrance Zones add up to approximately 5 acres

and will allow for parking, interpretive signage, and low level facility development at various entrance points into ABDSP.

4.5.2 UNAVOIDABLE AND IRREVERSIBLE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Management zone designations along with the goals and guidelines presented in the General Plan are intended to avoid, mitigate, and minimize significant environmental effects of facility development, maintenance, operations, and visitor use. This General Plan indicates that proposed projects will be mitigated to a level below significance. Each individual project must be consistent with the goals and guidelines of the General Plan, and must be in compliance with local, state, and federal regulations, which includes CEQA review and compliance.

If a specific project does not conform to the guidelines set forth in the General Plan, it will not be implemented. Therefore, there will be no new unavoidable significant environmental effects.

4.5.3 SIGNIFICANT EFFECT AND PROPOSED MITIGATION

Even though the majority of development will be contained to limited portions of ABDSP, development, maintenance, and use of facilities such as buildings, roads and trails, parking lots, campsites, picnic areas, utilities, and septic systems have the potential for significant short- and long-term impacts to the environment. Negative impacts could include soil disturbance, dust, increased erosion, altered drainage patterns, lowered water quality and quantity, degradation of cultural resources, and degradation of sensitive plant communities or populations of plants or animals.

4.5.3.1 Geological Resources (GR)

Impact

Demolition and construction activities associated with removal, development, and maintenance of facilities, particularly in Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II have the potential to cause significant increases in erosion, dust, soil disturbance, and topographical change.

Discussion

Grading and soil disturbance associated with facility expansion and development, such as construction of new campsites, restrooms, buildings, and other use areas, has the potential to cause significant changes in water and erosion processes unless specific measures are taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental impacts. Facility development, campgrounds, and trails will be constructed to avoid potentially hazardous areas or minimize risk.

Geological features may be fragile and subject to significant impacts. Erosion, park operations, facility development, and recreation have the potential to increase short- and long-term impacts.

Future projects will follow General Plan guidelines for geological resources, along with mitigation measures that seem appropriate and necessary at the time a project is scoped for implementation. In addition specific management plans containing mitigation measures will be followed.

Mitigation GR 1

General Plan goals and guidelines call for ongoing monitoring of impacts to geological resources, such as, change in topography and increased erosion. Geological features will be preserved and protected from significant impacts because of visitor use.

Mitigation GR 2

Facility development and placement of campsites will be designed to fit the natural contours of the land in order to limit grading and additional impacts to the geographical location within ABDSP.

4.5.3.2 Water Resources (WR)

Impacts

Demolition and construction activities associated with removal, development, and maintenance of facilities, as well as recreational use (particularly in Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II), have the potential to cause significant effects to drainage patterns, runoff, or discharge into surface waters.

Discussion

Visitor-use areas like Tamarisk Grove and Borrego Palm Canyon have the potential to affect water patterns and water quality and quantity. Recreational use and Park operations maintenance could have short- or long-term effects to natural flow patterns, water chemistry, temperature, nutrients, and oxygen levels.

ABDSP includes the montane meadows of the western mountain border as well as the dry desert floor. Water sources and habitats associated with water resources include wet meadows, vernal pools, riparian habitat, perennial and ephemeral creeks, ground water basins, dry lakes, and washes. Roads, trails, and maintenance can cause adverse impacts to water quality and hydrological patterns. Consumptive uses of water, as well as impacts from wastewater, development, recreation, and operations have the potential to significantly affect drainage patterns, runoff, and surface water. Subsidence collapse due to water overdraft from agriculture and recreation consumptive uses has the potential to affect ABDSP, Borrego Springs, and

other areas surrounding the Park boundaries (see Goals and Guidelines in Section 3.3.1.).

Future projects will follow General Plan guidelines, along with mitigation measures that seem appropriate and necessary at the time a project is scoped for implementation. In addition specific management plans containing mitigation measures will be followed. All actions will be in compliance with state and federal regulatory requirements.

Mitigation WR 1

Before project development can occur within the management zones, potential impacts to water resources need to be addressed. Potential impacts to water resources, including availability of sufficient water for facility use, will be identified and addressed. Specific management plans will include measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential impacts to water resources, and establish monitoring programs for potential long-term effects.

4.5.3.3 Biological Resources (BR)

Impacts

Activities (including development, maintenance, and recreational uses) involving an alteration of native vegetation or disturbance of wildlife and/or their habitat, have the potential to negatively affect endangered, threatened, or sensitive species and special status habitats.

Discussion

Many of the General Plan goals and guidelines address the protection and management of natural resources. Management of biotic resources includes maintenance of native plant communities, inventory and monitoring programs, protection of special status plants and animals, control of non-native plants and animals, protection of habitat buffers and movement corridors, and protection of natural resources from recreation and facility development. Natural Resource goals and guidelines (see Section 3.3.1) recognize that activities associated with construction, maintenance, facility use, and recreation have the potential to cause short- and long-term impacts to sensitive species and the ecosystem. It is essential to periodically survey key resources and implement management directives to protect and preserve natural resources, if necessary. Measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts must be incorporated into future Management Plans, development projects, and specific management actions. All actions will be in compliance with federal and state regulatory requirements. Future projects will follow General Plan guidelines, and include mitigation measures that seem appropriate and necessary at the time a project is scoped for implementation.

Mitigation BR 1

Prior to construction of facilities, potentially affected areas will be surveyed for the presence of special status species. Special status species found on a project site will be avoided to the fullest extent possible through project design, timing of activities, and implementation. If a special status species is detected within the area of potential impact, alternative sites will be considered, the area shall be flagged, and personnel educated on the sensitivity of an area and instructed to avoid it.

Mitigation BR 2

Project related activities within sensitive habitat of special status species will take place outside of their breeding season or season of greatest effect on their survivability. If project activities cannot avoid the breeding season or the season of greatest potential effect, California State Parks will arrange for surveys of any special status species within 300 feet of the project area. If special status species are discovered within this area of potential impact, surveys will continue through the period of construction. Activities will be postponed in the event of negative impacts to special status species until the negative impacts have passed.

Mitigation BR 3

Vehicles will be required to cross perennial streams at a 90-degree angle. This will prevent damage to sensitive riparian habitat and reduce the level of impact. The General Plan calls for ongoing studies to monitor sensitive species and their habitats in relation to management zones.

4.5.3.4 Paleontological Resources (PR)

Impact

Demolition and construction activities associated with removal, development, and maintenance of facilities, and Park operations and recreation activities have the potential to increase short- and long-term impacts to paleontological resources.

Discussion

Fossils are the remains of past life forms that once existed in the present area of ABDSP. They provide evidence for the reconstruction of prehistoric landscapes. Geological formations in ABDSP have produced fossils dating back to ca. 450 MY. Paleontological resources within the Park are of international significance (see Section 2.2.2.4). Grading and soil disturbance associated with facility expansion and development, such as construction of new campsites, restrooms, buildings, and other use areas, have the potential to cause significant changes in the naturally occurring geological formations that may contain fossils. Park operations and recreation also have the potential to increase short- and long-term impacts to geological and paleontological resources.

General Plan goals and guidelines call for ongoing monitoring, protection, analysis, and recovery of paleontological resources (Section 3.3.1.3). Future projects and management plans will follow General Plan guidelines, as well as Public Resource Code (Sections 5019.53 and 5097.5) and Department Resource Management Directives relevant to protection of paleontological resources. Specific mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to these resources will be incorporated as necessary at the time a project is scoped for implementation.

Mitigation PR 1

Proposed projects will be reviewed by a paleontologist to determine the potential for impacts to significant resources. New facilities will be designed and constructed to avoid paleontological resources to the extent possible. If impacts to paleontological resources are unavoidable, then a recovery plan will be developed and implemented. If fossils are uncovered during a project, work will be stopped until the resource can be recorded and a recovery and/or protection plan can be developed and implemented.

4.5.3.5 Cultural Resources (CR)

Impacts

Activities associated with facility removal, maintenance, or development, as well as visitor use, have the potential to disturb, degrade, or damage archaeological remains, historic features, or sacred sites.

Discussion

Significant archaeological and historical resources are known to occur within ABDSP. These include prehistoric Native American utilitarian and sacred sites, prehistoric and historic trails, and historic Civilian Conservation Corps structures. Additional historic structures within the Park include WWII sites, ranches, and homes.

Prehistoric occupation sites are susceptible to erosion because many of the artifacts and midden sites are located on or near the surface. Native American groups consider pictographs in Piedres Grandes and other areas throughout the Park, sacred areas. Pictographs, a form of rock art, have suffered from erosion and smoke damage because of recreational activities within the Park. Steps can be taken to preserve these sacred areas and reduce potential erosion and/or damage due to visitor use.

Short- and long-term impacts associated with visitor use can be the result of exceeding the carrying capacity of a specific geographic location within the Park. Carrying capacity considers the relationship between the resource make up of the land, visitor experience, and park purpose. All impacts will be mitigated to a level below significance in order to avoid meeting and/or exceeding the carrying capacity

of any area within the Park. Management directives used in order to enforce rules and educate visitors will not be exceedingly abrasive or lenient to protect both the resources and the visitor's recreational experience.

Several goals and guidelines contained in the General Plan serve to protect and preserve archaeological and historical resources by identifying, recording, protecting, and interpreting significant cultural resources (Section 3.3). These goals and guidelines understand that activities associated with demolition, construction, maintenance, visitor use, and recreation have the potential to cause significant adverse long-term impacts to cultural resources. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts need to be addressed in future Management Plans, development projects, and specific management actions. All actions will be in compliance with federal and state regulatory requirements with respect to cultural resources. Future projects will follow General Plan goals and guidelines, and include mitigation measures that are deemed appropriate and necessary at the time a project is scoped for implementation.

Mitigation CR 1

Prior to any actions that have the potential to disturb archaeological sites, additional research and testing will be carried out to determine if buried cultural remains exist. New facilities will be designed and constructed to avoid archaeological remains to the extent possible. If impacts to archaeological remains are unavoidable, then a recovery plan will be developed and implemented. To ensure that cultural resources are not adversely impacted, a California State Archaeologist will monitor those activities deemed to have the highest potential to disturb archaeological deposits. If cultural remains are uncovered during a project, work will be stopped until the resource can be recorded and a recovery and/or protection plan can be developed and implemented. Interpretive tools will be utilized to educate ABDSP visitors on protecting cultural resources that contribute to the integrity of the Park.

Mitigation CR 2

Proposed projects will be reviewed by California State Parks Cultural Resource Specialists (Archaeologists and Historians) to determine potential impacts to significant cultural resources. Significant resources will be mapped, recorded, and evaluated to determine their eligibility for placement in the National Register of Historic Places. Projects will be designed and implemented to avoid significant impacts to potentially eligible resources in compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Mitigation CR 3

A Cultural Resources Management Plan, to be prepared subsequent to adoption of the General Plan, will identify sensitive resource areas, which may include locations within Piedras Grandes, Mountain Palm Springs, Blair Valley, Harper and Hapaha

Flat, San Felipe Stage Station, and Coyote Canyon that may warrant extra protection (such as establishing preserve designations).

4.5.3.6 Aesthetic Resources (AR)

Impacts

Demolition and construction activities associated with removal, development, and maintenance of facilities, particularly in Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II, have the potential to cause significant impacts to aesthetic resources (i.e. viewsheds).

Discussion

The expansive views, natural appearance of geological and biological features, and quiet solitude are significant characteristics of the Park, that are highly valued by the public. The General Plan recognizes this (see Section 2.2.4) and limits intensive development and high visitor densities to specific zones representing a small percentage of the Park's acreage. Focused-Use Zone I, proposed in areas like Borrego Palm Canyon and Split Mountain, will allow for the most intensive development that may occur within ABDSP including a visitor center, restrooms, campsites, maintenance facilities and electrical hook-ups, and has the highest potential for negative impacts to aesthetic resources. However, smaller facilities located in the other management zones also have the potential to negatively affect aesthetic resources. Future projects should be designed to be consistent with cultural, historical, and natural characteristics and themes of ABDSP. Structures should be aesthetically pleasing to the eye, as well as blend with the environment and fit with the natural contours of the land, in order to limit grading and visual impacts.

Future projects will follow General Plan goals and guidelines, and any specific management plans containing guiding criteria or mitigation measures for limiting impacts to aesthetics (see Section 3.3.1.10). To avoid, minimize, or mitigate negative impacts to aesthetic resources mitigation measures that are deemed appropriate and necessary at the time a project is scoped for implementation will be incorporated.

Mitigation AR 1

Design and review of proposed projects and activities shall consider potential effects to site-specific aesthetic resources including regional characteristics and themes, viewsheds, dark skies, and topographical, geological, cultural, and natural features. Design and construction measures that avoid, minimize, or mitigate these effects shall be incorporated into every project.

4.5.3.7 Recreation Resources (RR)

Impacts

Management zone designations and sub-unit classifications associated with allowable visitor use has the potential to adversely affect some recreational activities as a result of cultural, natural, and aesthetic resource protection. Development, maintenance, erosion, dust, and resource degradation may also have an adverse affect on visitor experience.

Discussion

Management zone designations act as tools to preserve sensitive natural and cultural resources while providing recreation activities and visitor-serving facilities. Management zone designations and sub-unit classifications have the potential to restrict certain recreational activities in some areas in order to protect sensitive resources or visitor experiences, particularly in the Cultural Preserve and Wilderness Zones. For example, developed and semi-primitive campsites will be provided in Focused-Use Zone I and Focused-Use Zone II, and open camping will be allowed in the Backcountry and Wilderness Zones (which represent over 90% of the Park's acreage), but camping of any kind is prohibited in the Cultural Preserve Zone. In addition, camping will be restricted within 200 yards of water sources in all zones. Highway-legal vehicle use is confined to designated roads, but roads and motor vehicle use are prohibited within Wilderness and Cultural Preserve zones. (See Section 3.2.4 for description of appropriate activities and facilities within each management zone.) Park users are concerned with maintaining current access and recreational activities in the Park. Although the Cultural Preserve designation may limit overnight camping and highway-legal vehicles, it will permit other types of recreation activities, such as interpretive and educational programs, and hiking on designated trails. Therefore, adverse impacts to some types of recreation activities will be offset by other recreational opportunities. The General Plan proposes to designate approximately 0.004% of the Park as a Cultural Preserve at this time. The General Plan also proposes to increase the amount of land designated as Wilderness from 65% to 74% of the Park acreage. While no existing roads or vehicle access would be affected by this action, it would eliminate the possibility for new roads and highway-legal vehicle access from an additional 9% of the Park.

Additionally, each visitor has his or her own sensitivity to visitor carrying capacity. For instance, an individual's tolerance of user or facility densities could be exceeded by low-level facility development in the Backcountry, while another individual is comforted by the presence of other people or facilities. A Visitor Study for ABDSP, conducted by the University of Montana, indicates that Park visitors will accept low to moderate levels of intrusion, i.e. land disturbance and crowding (see Section 2.2.7.1). Other aspects of recreation management include the degree to which multiple recreational activities compliment or conflict with one another, and

with maintenance of resource integrity (see Sections 2.2.7, 2.4.7, 3.3.1.7). The General Plan proposes that several focused management plans be prepared to deal with some of these complexities, including a Cultural Resources Management Plan, Natural Resources Management Plan, Backcountry Camping Management Plan, Roads Management Plan, Trails Management Plan, Interpretive Management Plan, and Facility Management Plan (Section 3.4).

Mitigation RR 1

General Plan goals and guidelines call for an assessment of current and potential recreational activities for compatibility with State Park, Wilderness, Cultural Preserve, and other land designations. Future management plans including, Backcountry Camping, Roads, Trails, Cultural Resource, Natural Resource, Interpretive, and Facility Management Plans, will address the relative distribution of the different types of recreational activities and potential inherent conflicts, as well as specific mitigation and monitoring measures, in order to provide high quality outdoor recreation activities while preserving the integrity of the Park.

Mitigation RR2

California State Parks will make available to the public alternative recreational activities that are compatible with resource protection in areas within ABDSP that contain sensitive natural and cultural resources.

4.5.4 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

The following issues are not expected to be significant as a result of the implementation of the General Plan.

4.5.4.1 Noise

An increase in noise is anticipated to be nominal as a result of the General Plan. Campgrounds constructed near highways or county roads could experience some traffic noise, but sighting of such facilities will consider noise from nearby sources, and minimize the effects. Facility development will be constructed to avoid potential impacts to breeding birds or other animals, thus minimizing any potential long-term effects of noise on wildlife. Noise due to project development would be temporary and limited to daylight hours. Current Park regulations minimize campground noise. All future projects will be evaluated under the California Environmental Quality Act, in order to address specific potential impacts and mitigation measures.

4.5.4.2 Air Quality

The western portion of ABDSP is within the San Diego Air Basin, while the eastern part of the Park is in the Salton Sea Air Basin. The majority of the Air Quality within the Park is not significantly affected by regional emissions but is susceptible to field

burning and travel on unpaved roads (SR-78 Transportation Concept Report, p. 30). Adoption of the General Plan or future Management Plans is not anticipated to result in a significant increase in these effects. High dust levels due to project and facility development are short-term effects found not to be significant.

4.5.4.3 Traffic

Although there may be an increase in population in the surrounding metropolitan areas, an increase in traffic patterns and/or congestion is not likely to occur as a result of this plan. The main corridor into the Park is State Route (SR) 78, a two-lane conventional highway, followed by three county highways (S1, S2, and S22). These highways are rural roads that operate at high levels of service except for weekend use (primarily on Sunday afternoons) during the Winter/Spring Season. According to the SR-78 Transportation Concept Report (September 1998), SR-78 is currently operating at a level of Service B-free to stable flow (the minimum operating Level of Service is E-significant congestion and an extremely unstable flow).

The SR-78 Transportation Concept Report addresses compatibility between land use developments and statewide roads. In 1998, Caltrans projected the development of Lucky 5 Ranch to increase daily trips on SR-78 by 87, 900. Portions of this property have been purchased by California State Parks and should significantly reduce this projection. The Lucky 5 Ranch will not have a trip-inducing development project of this magnitude.

4.5.4.4 Hazardous Materials

The Carrizo Impact Area, a former military range, could contain hazardous materials and has been closed to general public under the California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14 Division 3 Chapter 6 Section 14604. This area will be closed to the public until decontamination has been completed; a condition unchanged by the General Plan. Personnel of the United States Armed Forces may enter for the purpose of decontamination and ordinance disposal.

4.5.5 GROWTH-INDUCING IMPACTS

ABDSP is primarily a wilderness Park that includes visitor-use areas. There is the potential to increase public-use areas within specific management zones in the Park. The General Plan will not substantially increase current day use or overnight visitors within the Park. Implementation of new facilities will accommodate the rising population. There will be no significant growth-inducing impacts, because the General Plan will not authorize a substantial increase of housing or employment opportunities, nor will it provide infrastructure for additional growth.

4.5.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Proposals within the General Plan will not significantly contribute to the cumulative impacts of past, present, or future projects within the region. The General Plan recognizes the need for protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources within the Park, and it has taken steps to protect these areas by establishing management zones along with goals and guidelines for development and management. Some types of recreation will be reduced in the expanded Wilderness and Cultural Preserve Zones in an effort to protect valuable resources. While this will negatively affect certain types of recreational activities, it will have a less-than-significant effect on recreation overall. Future projects must conform to the General Plan and will require project-level environmental compliance.

4.5.7 BENEFICIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Many of the proposed management practices will protect or enhance Park resources, such as plants, wildlife, viewsheds, and cultural resources, above and beyond what is required for the mitigation of impacts resulting from the current uses of the Park. Management guidelines contained in future Backcountry Camping, Roads, Trails, Cultural Resource, Natural Resource, Interpretive, and Facility Management Plans will likely result in additional beneficial environmental effects.

4.5.8 MITIGATION AND MONITORING

Mitigation will be specified during the preparation of each project proposed under the General Plan. A Mitigation Monitoring Program will be implemented, as appropriate, for each proposed project under the General Plan and will require the approval by natural and cultural specialists. At a minimum, the mitigation measures stated in Section 4.3.3 will be incorporated into project development in order to avoid impacts resulting from facility construction, maintenance, and visitor use.

4.6 PUBLIC COORDINATION

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) was circulated through the State Clearinghouse, to local city and county planning offices, as well as to affected special interest organizations and individuals. The State Clearinghouse reference number is SCH # 200201060. The CDFG responded to the NOP. The NOP and NOP responses are contained in a separate appendix distributed to the public with the draft EIR. Please see Section 2.3.5 within the Existing Conditions Section discussion of additional public involvement utilized during the planning process.